

UPC Summer 2025 Newsletter



Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” (James 1:17)

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From our Interim Moderator

Rev. Joan Masterton

It may have been a long time in coming, but summer weather has finally arrived... whether you wanted it or not. The season begins; stay cool!

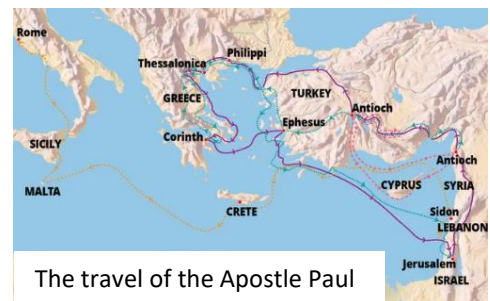
At its June meeting, the Session agreed to hold a workshop on Sunday September 7th after worship. We'll enjoy lunch and then participate in a conversation about your vision for your congregation. What are our current realities? How is God calling UPC into the future? What are the options? We hope you'll come and bring your thoughts, questions, hopes and dreams with you. We need your input! Please mark this date on your calendar now, and plan to participate.

A variety of preachers are eagerly awaiting their opportunities to worship with you at UPC over the coming months. Please support them as you spend time in prayer and praise at Sunday morning worship. The post-service fellowship is always enjoyable as well.

Scott and I are taking our post-retirement, long-awaited holiday. We're camping our way to the Pacific Ocean (Canada side only!) and have just arrived in Vancouver. Tomorrow, we'll sail to Victoria and spent a week exploring Vancouver Island.

The Apostle Paul was a great traveller; the Bible records 3 specific journeys he took, and he often talked about the next trip he would take... often to return to one of the congregations he helped to start. We yearn to travel far, and we yearn to return home. May God help us put all of the phases of our lives into perspective, and remind us that wherever we go, and whatever experiences we have, good and bad, God is present with us. May your summer be blessed with new understandings, greater perspective, and renewed hope.

Joan





Summer is definitely here with temperatures to match and then some. I hope you are all managing to stay comfortable and at least somewhat cool. Despite the heat, inside UPC is pleasantly cool for the service. We hope you will come out this summer to hear the excellent people who are on our pulpit supply schedule.

A reminder that Joan Masterton, our Interim Moderator, is away on vacation for 6 weeks. Rev. Peter Ma is on call for any pastoral emergencies. If you need to connect with Peter, please call Julie (905-475-6233) at the church or me (416-276-0577). Also, I would encourage you to reach out to those in need of connection with UPC friends in whatever ways you are able (visits, phone calls, cards).

Session met earlier in June, and we are grateful to Joan for being able and willing to join our meeting via Zoom from the Masterton's vacation campgrounds in western Canada. We are planning a follow-up to our congregational meeting of May 18. For your information, here are some of the points raised by those in attendance at the May meeting.

- CPC: are offering to help with building tasks – we should use their help, they will not be calling a minister at this time
- instead of a search team, a team to look at UPC's future – what the future might look like – hopefully to call on some not as actively involved at UPC beyond Sunday morning
- we are enjoying Christine and Michael Way-Skinner – the pool of ministers is shrinking – less are graduating and more are retiring
- suggested Session consider a company to look after our grounds which are badly in need of attention – maybe include CPC in this discussion in a sharing capacity
- in fall will hold joint service with CPC at 11am with possibly a bbq/lunch to follow
- pastoral care needs support – Joan cannot do it all - she is on vacation for 2 months in summer and will ask Peter Ma to cover
- each of us should try to do our best to reach out to those we know who are in need
- people come to church for various reasons, including the sermon and for fellowship – UPC is lacking in activities

The follow-up to the May meeting is planned for **Sunday, Sept. 7** and this will also be a gathering after the service. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend. Come and have your say about UPC's future. This event will be more structured with more targeted discussion.

UPC's Hope in Action Fund has allowed our church to accomplish much good, over the years, that we would not have been able to do otherwise. At the same time, there has sometimes been challenges in the decision-making around HIA funds and the projects to be funded. Given the original 5-year HIA plan expired 3 years ago, the HIA team has

made recommendations to Session to change the current structure.

After review, and with the guidance and advice of the Stewardship staff of the PCC, it was agreed that, going forward, Session will assume responsibility for the financial management and administration of the Hope in Action Fund. It was also agreed that a new HIA policy and terms of reference need to be developed. Session has asked the HIA Team to draft a revised policy document to better address our current and ongoing needs as a congregation. When the revised policy draft is complete it will be reviewed by Session and presented to the congregation for approval. It should be noted that UPC will continue to seek the guidance of the Stewardship staff at PCC in this process.

Thank you for your ongoing support and care for UPC. Let's pull together during this time of transition where our path may not yet be clear but working together with God's grace we will find our way forward.

Please reach out to any Session member if you have any questions or concerns.

Many blessings,

Margaret, Clerk

On behalf of Session: Eleanor Clayton, Tom Giles, Danielle Huang, Heather Jones, Pat Richards, Alison Toscano, Interim Moderator, Joan Masterton



Time to Celebrate

Congratulations to Helen!

Helen has become a great grandmother for the second time. The new addition to Helen's family, Rowan David James McGill was born on June 14 at Markham Stouffville Hospital. Rowan is a chill little dude.



Nancy Roberston celebrated her 91st birthday with her ESL class on June 17.

Happy Birthday, Nancy!





Welcome to Canada, Ali Al-Harbawi – Their Family Circle is Now Complete!

This young Iraqi man was brought to our attention by the PCC in 2019. His family live here in Markham and Ali had been living in Jordan since he fled from Iraq. He was the last of his immediate family who had not yet made it to Canada. UPC agreed to be the co-sponsor with Ali's father, Yesri, and the process began. With the guidance and support of the Refugee Team of PWS&D the appropriate IRCC (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada) forms and conditions were completed over time.

In April 2023, Ali was approved for settlement in Canada. However, there were still some processes to go through and there were some bumps along the way. The waiting was agonizing for Ali and his family, as you can well imagine. I got to know his mom and dad over those years while we went through this journey. There were often emails with Ali too, where I tried to keep him hopeful when things looked somewhat uncertain. Knowing that there were UPC people praying for him was a comfort to both Ali and his family.

Then, this past April 2, we received word from IRCC that Ali was booked on a flight and would be arriving at Pearson on April 16. It was somewhat out of the blue, since the last we heard there were some issues and there might be further delays. So needless to say, there was much joy in the Al-Harbawi household. It had been 6 years since they last saw Ali.

It was a joy and privilege for Alison, Julie, Randy and I to be there with this family at Pearson to welcome Ali. After a bit of a wait, finally, he came through the doors, and the reunion was something to witness such joyful emotion. It was truly amazing. Their family circle was now complete. To see this wonderful result was beyond satisfying. It was proof positive for me, that in the midst of this troubled world there is still reason to have hope.

Sometime in the fall we will look forward to a visit from Ali and his family. It will be nice for you to meet them. They are a warm and caring family. They look forward to meeting the people of UPC who were praying for them during their time of need.

Your prayers matter,

Thank you,

Margaret



Ali in the red baseball cap (front row, the third from the left) was united with his father (front row, the fifth from the left), his mother (front row, in a white top), and his two younger brothers (standing next to Ali's father in the back row).

Facility and Maintenance Update

Manse Work:

This year we have been able to accomplish work at the Manse. The flooring of the garden shed was rotting due to the wood having been placed directly on the grass. The shed was removed and a proper base laid before replacing it. At the front of the house, the wood trim around the bay window was showing signs of rot. Unfortunately, it was not just the trim, but the rot had gone right through. This meant replacing more than anticipated. To prevent this situation arising again, we used siding rather than wood. Also, the gingerbread trim had to be removed. If anyone had ever been in the manse in a wind storm, you would appreciate the awful noise caused by the wind catching the chimney pipe. Work has been done to remediate this also.

Church:

The big project this year is restoring the front gardens. Major thanks to Lorne Cook for his expertise in selecting plants and guiding the landscape company. The chosen day for installing the new plants was heavy rain, but between the landscaping crew, Lorne and myself, the plants were installed.

Thanks for the efforts of several people, the "manufacture" of 500 toys was completed. The original donation to cover this was \$2000, however this was increased to \$2500 which has covered the cost (ex HST) of having our trees pruned. The branches were chipped and will be used on the front garden to help prevent weeds and keep moisture in the soil. We are pleased that we are able to use our own mulch and not add to landfill.

A shout out to George Noble who has joined the lawn cutting and snow removal team. His help is greatly *appreciated*.

Future:

We may look at our financial picture and think that everything is going to well why do we need

to keep giving.

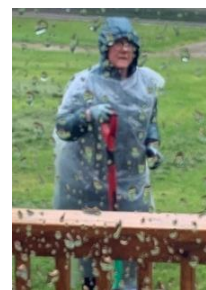
There are two windows and a sidelight in the Sanctuary where the wood has deteriorated to the point that water and air are coming in. We also have 2 windows in the church hall where the seal has broken. A temporary fix has been put in place in the sanctuary, but we will need to be looking at window replacement. Maintenance will work on obtaining quotes so that we can better understand the financial impact.

The last time we lost shingles, the roofer evaluated the overall roof and rendered the opinion that we have about 5 years to go before needing replacement.

We also have the balance of car park cost to pay.

A huge thanks to the team from Celebration who came out last week to weed the garden and move the mulch onto the butterfly garden and under the fir tree. Two of the guys fixed the electrical socket which had become detached. They also dug out 3 stone slabs that were in the middle of the lawn.

Alison



Recent *Hope-In-Action* Team Activity

Since meeting with Karen Plater, Associate Secretary, Stewardship and Planned Giving for the PCC in February, we have been active and working on a few things and are pleased to report the following:

1. Tom Giles was named as the Session representative on the Team
2. Karen Plater sent a report with recommendations following our meeting with her
3. The Team met twice to consider and discuss Karen's report and in June we prepared and sent a report to Session with recommendations.

We anticipate that we will hear more from the work Session will be doing as they lead us through this time of transition and discernment in the coming weeks.

Jean

Community Keeps the Flame of Hope Alive

Christian community is the place where we keep the flame of hope alive among us and take it seriously so that it can grow and become stronger in us. In this way we can live with courage, trusting that there is a spiritual power in us when we are together that allows us to live in this world without surrendering to the powerful forces constantly seducing us toward despair. That is how we dare to say that God is a God of love even when we see hatred all around us. That is why we can claim that God is a God of life even when we see death and destruction and agony all around us. We say it together. We affirm it in each other. Waiting together, nurturing what has already begun, expecting its fulfillment – that is the meaning of marriage, friendship, community, and the Christian life.

By Henri Nouwen

Please continue to support the Markham Food Bank throughout the summer

UPC 2025 Summer Food Donation Goal:

80 cans of

- Soup
- Salmon and sardines
- Beans
- Fruit



The Markham Food Bank serves over 1,000 individuals every month, providing much needed food supplies to supplement family nutritional requirements.

Let's put these items on our shopping list so we can help fill the UPC Food Bank wagon and make a positive difference to food insecurity in our community.

Financial Contributions via

- Markham Food Bank website
- UPC - clearly marked "Markham Food Bank" is also encouraged.

Did you know that when bees build comb, they make their own scaffolding using their bodies? It is called festooning. The bees hang together leg to leg to form a kind of living lacework structure. Just another amazing example of what can be achieved by working together!



Submitted by Pat